



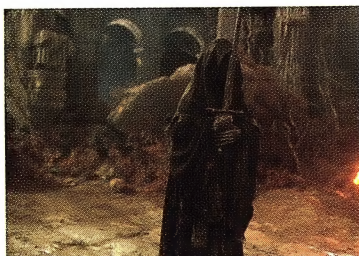
THE LORD OF THE RINGS

The Film: ★★★★★
The Disc: ★★★

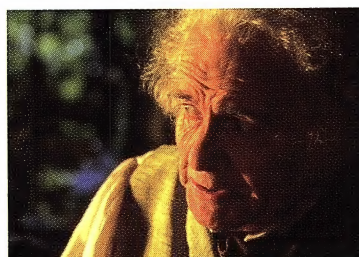
Genre : Fantasy Adventure **Director :** Peter Jackson **Starring :** Elijah Wood, Ian McKellan, Viggo Mortensen **Rated:** M15+ **Run Time :** 178 mins **Made :** 2001
Distributor : Roadshow

F: DL | A: DD 5.1 | V: W/S 16:9 | R: 2.35:1 | L: English | S: HI English

THE FILM: Four Hobbits, two men, a wizard, an elf and a dwarf embark on a perilous quest to destroy the One Ring of Power and prevent the second coming of the dark Lord Sauron.



Uh oh, spooky back robed figures - cue ominous choral music score.



Bilbo Baggins (Ian Holm) implores Jackson to film *The Hobbit*.



"Are you Tolkien to me?"



Last year must surely go on record as the coming-of-age of fantasy on film. Having fared less successfully on celluloid than its fellow siblings of the fantastique - sci-fi and horror - the doyens of fantasy; goblins, elves, dragons, wizards and mucho magic have long suffered the indignity of lacklustre screen treatments. From the kiddie friendly *Labyrinth* and *Willow*, to the fun-but-flawed *Dragonslayer* and *Legend*, only Wolfgang Petersen's *The NeverEnding Story* (Limahl song and sequels aside) and John Boorman's magnificent *Excalibur* have come close to successfully capturing the true essence of fantasy, a genre whose epic scope and intricate mythologies are largely confined to chunky bestsellers with maps and appendices. Multi-book sagas like Raymond E.

Feist's 'Riftwar' series, Stephen Donaldson's 'Chronicles of Thomas Covenant' and David Eddings 'The Belgariad' continue to capture the imaginations of readers worldwide, but each of them owe an enormous debt to the granddaddy of them all - J.R.R. Tolkien's 'The Lord of the Rings', an epic novel comprising three books; 'The Fellowship of the Ring', 'The Two Towers' and 'The Return of the King'.

Set in the vast mythical realm of Middle-earth, a world rich in legend and history (later given reverent, scholastic detail in Tolkien's 'The Silmarillion'), 'The Lord of the Rings' extrapolates events and characters introduced in its compact prequel 'The Hobbit', concerning the seemingly innocuous discovery of the lost

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING



GANDALF THE GREY

Wise, wily and wonderful wizard with a fondness for halflings and the guts to stand up to a Balrog. "You shall not pass!" he declares, before promptly falling to his doom at Khazad-dûm.



FRODO BAGGINS

The Ringbearer. Innocent but brave young Hobbit and nephew to Bilbo Baggins who's charged with the momentous duty of destroying the One Ring in the fires of Mount Doom.



SAMWISE GAMGEE

Loyal and devoted buddy of Frodo caught eavesdropping on matters concerning the Ring and drafted into the Fellowship. Hang on, wasn't he one of *The Goonies*?



MERRY AND PIPPIN

A Brandybuck and a Took. Both bumbling and brave, these mischievous Hobbits assisted Frodo on his quest only to be captured by the Uruk-hai and taken to Isengard.



the crowning achievement in a consistently imaginative body of work...an instant classic

Ring of Power by one Bilbo Baggins. When animator Ralph Bakshi's incomplete adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* (1978) left fans seriously underwhelmed, a live-action version that would truly capture Tolkien's immense vision seemed the dream of eternal optimists. Then along came the digital revolution and its jaw-dropping showcases - *Jurassic Park*, *Starship Troopers* and *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* - and suddenly the potential applications for the fantasy genre were positively mouth-watering, a fact not lost on talented Kiwi director Peter Jackson who was looking for a new challenge following his abortive attempt to remake *King Kong*.

Already a champion of the cult film circuit thanks to his outrageous splatter-toons *Bad Taste* and *Braindead*, and having gained critical kudos for the accomplished arthouse drama *Heavenly Creatures*, the announcement that Jackson would tackle Tolkien was truly cause for celebration and his opening salvo, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, is undoubtedly the crowning achievement in a consistently imaginative body of work.

Jackson's ambitious adaptation is a magnificent labour of love and an instant classic that might yet dethrone even the mighty Lucas empire as one of the most beloved of film trilogies. Made by a fan for

the fans but still immediately accessible to the unconverted, *The Fellowship of the Ring* dutifully captures the essential elements of Tolkien's grand fantasy - namely the age-old battle between good and evil and the all-important quest that drives its diminutive heroes - and weaves it into a dense and detailed cinematic tapestry that's rich in character and staggering in execution. Following a spectacular prologue where the breathy narration of Cate Blanchett succinctly summarises the history of Middle-earth and the phenomenal battle that led to the defeat of the Dark Lord Sauron, the film picks up some 60 years later in the home of the Hobbits - those unobtrusive halflings, both



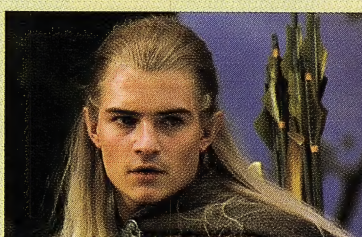
ARAGORN

Valiant Ranger and heir to the throne of Gondor, the brooding Aragorn (aka Strider) became the sworn protector to Frodo and led the Fellowship following Gandalf's fall. Fancies elf girl Arwen.



BOROMIR

From the Council of Elrond to the Fellowship of the Ring, the loyal but conflicted Boromir was touched by darkness and attempted to seize the ring from Frodo in a moment of madness.



LEGOLAS

Member of the Council of Elrond and elven representative of the Fellowship whose flair with a bow and endless supply of arrows were invaluable when battling the Orc hordes.



GIMLI

Representing the dwarves, the fiercely proud and blustering Gimli became a valuable ally and close friend to Legolas. "No one tosses a dwarf" he bellows when offered assistance.

gentle of nature and fuzzy of feet.

At the request of the wizard Gandalf (Ian McKellan), Bilbo Baggins (Ian Holm) bequeaths a magical ring to his nephew Frodo (Elijah Wood) that just happens to be the legendary One Ring of Power; "forged by the Dark Lord Sauron in the fires of Mount Doom" and now coveted by the forces of darkness as the instrument of Sauron's return.

Forced to flee with the shadowy agents of evil - Ringwraiths - in relentless pursuit, Frodo and Hobbit pals Sam (Sean Astin), Pippin (Billy Boyd) and Merry (Dominic Monaghan) begin their perilous quest toward the dark realm of Mordor, for only there can the ring can be utterly destroyed...

The logical decision to film Tolkien's epic as three films (as suggested by New Line boss Bob Shaye following Jackson's ambitious pitch for two films) presented an enormous challenge, particularly given Jackson's unprecedented move to film all three simultaneously in his native New Zealand.

With a shooting schedule of 15 months, a 2000 strong crew, and the perfect cast, such autonomy afforded Jackson the luxury of working outside the confines of the Hollywood system, and unlike blockbuster boffos like George Lucas who seem more committed to the marketing and merchandise, the result is a unique looking epic that emphasises storytelling and character above special fx overkill and action figure sales.

Formerly the stuff of collectable calendars and glossy limited edition prints, cinematographer Andrew Lesnie brings Tolkien's world to vivid life, his acrobatic lens diving and swooping into Isengard's pits, or becoming an active participant in a frenzied troll fight. Breathtaking New Zealand locations stand in for Middle-earth, gargantuan sets the size of city blocks recreate the majesty of the Elven kingdoms of Rivendell and Lothlorien, and the CG is cranked up for some exquisitely realised set pieces - the descent into the Mines of Moria,

the crumbling Bridge of Khazad-dûm, the mighty Balrog demon - all courtesy of New Zealand based fx and creature shop WETA, originally set up to handle fx duty on Jackson's spook comedy *The Frighteners*. Less obvious (but no less remarkable) is the film's subtler use of fx to provide detail through digital scaling, depth deception and forced perspective shots, ensuring the pint-sized Hobbits remain proportionate to their taller companions.

If *The Fellowship of the Ring* is any indication, the tireless Jackson, together with wife Fran Walsh and playwright cum Tolkien expert Phillipa Boyens have done a remarkable job in transforming the books into a workable screenplay. Only the most hardcore of fans will gripe over the loss of incendiary characters like Tom Bombadil when major battle sequences given only a cursory mention in the text are now gloriously realised on the screen. Additionally, the footnote romance between Aragorn and Arwen has been retrieved from

"One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,
One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them"





the appendices, giving Liv Tyler a beefier role while providing a sly visual reference to *The Princess Bride* in the process. Like its fantasy compatriot *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, rather than distract with marquee names hired to sell more tickets *The Fellowship of the Ring's* careful casting has ensured the actors effectively vanish into Tolkien's characters. The most inspired choice must surely be the legendary Christopher Lee (pulling dual bad guy duty both here and in *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones*) as Saruman, who appears to have given his agent a wake-up call after a lengthy absence from screens following a minor cameo in Tim Burton's *Sleepy Hollow* (1999). Through his own initiative (and some alleged prompting from internet über-nerd Harry Knowles), wide-eyed Elijah Wood won the pivotal role of Frodo with his own improvised audition tape. A memorable teen player largely consigned to unmemorable films (*Deep Impact*, *The Faculty*, and er... the Paul Hogan *Flipper*), Wood makes a sometimes stiff but mostly endearing Hobbit hero. The great Ian McKellan, who can now comfortably segue between Shakespeare and *X-Men* (and stop a Balrog in its tracks), contributes a grandstanding turn as the wise and weary wizard Gandalf, and even the normally suspect Liv Tyler works as elf

girl Arwen who will play a more important role in the later films.

John Rhys Davies (aka Sallah from the *Indiana Jones* trilogy) does his best Brian Blessed impersonation as blustering dwarf Gimli, while the serene beauty of our own Cate Blanchett brings the elf queen Galadriel to luminous life. But ultimately it's unsung star Viggo Mortensen whose gallant Aragorn almost singlehandedly steals the film from the rest of the Fellowship. And the good news is Viggo will also figure prominently in the later chapters as his importance to the kingdom of Gondor is gradually revealed. Look out too for Jackson's own cameo, he's the bearded guy eating a carrot as the travellers enter the village of Bree. *The Fellowship of the Ring* not only alters the landscape of cinematic fantasy forever, but signals Jackson's arrival as a major Hollywood player - but one who's not about to surrender his independence nor compromise his personal vision to meet the expectations of the masses. While those who revel in the cartoonish spectacles of the *Star Wars* revival might bitch about the three hour running time and sometimes measured pace, this is the fantastique made flesh at last, and more importantly... it's better than the animated version!

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THE FORGOTTEN RING

Is the first in Peter Jackson's mighty trilogy the masterpiece it's cracked up to be, or is it just another Hollywood re-imagination?

REGION 4 looks back on the original *The Lord of the Rings*.



Long before Peter Jackson embarked on his epic quest to turn New Zealand into Tolkien's Middle-earth, the creator of *Fritz the Cat* was already at the drawing board. Animator Ralph Bakshi together with producer Saul Zaents deliberated long and hard over the logistics of bringing Tolkien's 1000+ page masterpiece to the screen as an animated feature. Hiring medieval scholar Chris Conkling to adapt (as you would) and under the assumption that there would be two features, the first installment of Bakshi and Zaents' *The Lord of the Rings* sought to streamline 'The Fellowship of the Ring' and most of 'The Two Towers' into an economical 133 minutes.

Problem was, the second feature never eventuated and audiences were left with a frustratingly incomplete and mostly inert treatment of their favourite epic, made all the more disastrous by Bakshi's bold use of 'rotoscoping' - the technique of tracing animation over live-action footage. Employed predominantly to accentuate the scenes depicting the Ringwraiths and Orcs, the roto-scoping technique only served to conflict with the more traditional animation designs. In all fairness, Bakshi's *Lord of the Rings* is no *Cool World*, but in the wake of Jackson's live-action behemoth its heavy-handed approach, few concessions for Tolkien virgins, and unforgivable lack of closure makes it little more than a flawed curiosity.

The original but not the best.



WACKO JACKO

A PETER JACKSON FILMOGRAPHY



BAD TASTE (1988)

Jackson's modestly budgeted debut lives up to its title with blood, brains and exploding sheep.



MEET THE FEEBLES (1989)

A troupe of seedy puppets sing, dance, spew and do drugs in Jackson's grubby Muppet tribute. Jim Henson's still turning in his grave!



BRAINDEAD (1992)

A mama's boy and his trusty lawnmower are all that stand between New Zealand and a hungry horde of flesh eating zombies. Stupendous fun!



HEAVENLY CREATURES (1994)

Based on actual events, the obsessive friendship of two teenaged girls leads to matricide in Jackson's (and Kate Winslett's) breakthrough film.



THE FRIGHTENERS (1996)

Ghostbusters meets *Natural Born Killers* in Jackson's first 'mainstream' offering. The best Michael J. Fox film since *Back to the Future*.



SNEAK PEEK:

While the world rediscovers the magic of *The Fellowship of the Ring* on DVD this August, Peter Jackson is currently prepping Episode II of the saga, *The Two Towers*, for its much anticipated big screen debut this Christmas. Those who revisited *Fellowship* in cinemas during post Easter screenings would have noticed a three minute teaser for *The Two Towers* tagged to the end of the film, offering a tantalising glimpse of this work in progress. As Frodo and Sam journey into the darkness of Mordor, the Riders of Rohan prepare for a major assault on Saruman's Isengard fortress and an all out assault on the Orc army at Helm's Deep. New characters include Theoden, the King of Rohan (Bernard Hill), genre favourite Brad Dourif as Grima Wormtongue - chief counsellor to the King and agent of Saruman, David Wenham as Faramir - brother of Boromir, and Miranda Otto as Eowyn. Also revealed: the treacherous Gollum, oversized arachnid Shelob, and new allies Treebeard and the Ents. To whet the appetite, an exclusive 10 minute behind-the-scenes preview of *The Two Towers* will be included on the *Fellowship* DVD.



THE TWO TOWERS



A two-disc affair, **Disc 1** features a ravishing 2.35:1 widescreen transfer of the theatrical version of the film with predictably lively and robust Dolby 5.1 audio (but sadly no DTS).

Disc 2 contains over two hours of bonus material including **15 featurettes** originally created for the official *lordoftherings.net* website. Although running a brief 2-5 mins each, these incredibly informative snippets combine to provide invaluable insight into the mythology, locales and cultures of Tolkien's Middle-earth together with loads of behind-the-scenes footage, interviews and character testimonials from key cast members Elijah Wood, Viggo Mortensen, Orlando Bloom, Cate Blanchett, Liv Tyler and Ian McKellan. Topics explored include: *Finding Hobbiton*, *Hobbiton Comes Alive*, *Believing the World of Bree*, *Ringwraiths: The Fallen Kings*, *Languages of Middle-earth*, *Two Wizards*, *Music of Middle-earth* and *Weather-top: The Windy Hill*.

The making of *The Fellowship of the Ring* is further explored in a pair of **documentaries**. *Quest for the Ring* (a Fox TV Special) is a 21 min promotional piece designed to introduce the uninitiated into Tolkien's world and

Jackson's vision, while *A Passage to Middle-earth* (a Sci-Fi Channel Special) clocks in at a generous 41 mins and offers a more detailed look at the production process from location scouting, weapon forging, set construction digital fx, costumes, and much more.

An additional featurette: *Houghton Mifflin Welcomes You to Middle-earth* is essentially an extended plug for publisher HM's tie-in 'Official Movie Guide' and 'Visual Companion' (designed to be played in bookstores) but worthwhile in that it touches on the epic's publishing history and highlights the essential contributions of renowned Tolkien illustrators and conceptual artists Alan Lee and John Howe to the film.

There's also a look at the creation of the inevitable tie-in video game from Electronic Arts, a **music video** for Enya's haunting theme song 'May It Be', two **teasers** and **theatrical trailer** plus 6 x 30 sec **TV Spots**.

Given the epic nature of the production you might be tempted to break into a mournful version of Peggy Lee's 'Is That All There Is?' but come November 12, Middle-earthlings will be more than catered for as **An Inside Look at the Special Extended DVD Edition**

of The Fellowship of the Ring reveals.

Say what? Special Extended Edition? Does that mean we're gonna have to buy it again?! The short answer is yes, but you're not gonna mind because, as Jackson reveals, this version will contain 30 minutes of additional footage restored to the film complete with newly completed fx sequences and music score. A four disc set, the supplementary material will be a mind-boggling, six hour, all-inclusive look at the production process of which a sneak preview is provided here.

The decision to issue two staggered releases of *The Fellowship of the Ring* is not a commercial gambit but rather enables the busy Peter Jackson to complete post-production on *The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King*, and prepare what looks to be the ultimate DVD edition of the opening chapter.

This dual release allows fans to have their cake and eat it too. Let's face it, with the theatrical cut we all know and love available to buy August 6 and boasting it's own impressive supplement - is anybody seriously going to wait until November to bring Frodo and the Fellowship home?

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The lord of *The Lord of the Rings*: director Peter Jackson.



Memo to WETA - digitally remove sheep!



Liv Tyler makes daddy proud.



The orcs learn of *Harry Potter's* pan scan only release.



"I'm getting too old for this shit!"